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CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on the negotiations for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The European Union expresses its support for the earliest possible transmission by the Conference on Disarmament of a draft Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty to the United Nations General Assembly.

The declaration of the European Union on 22 April stated as follows: "The European Union attaches the highest priority and is strongly committed to the conclusion, before the end of the spring session of the Conference on Disarmament, of the negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty which will prohibit any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion, so as to enable its signature by autumn, at the outset of the fifty-first United Nations General Assembly".

While the spring session concluded without formally adopting the treaty, there is still time to meet the objective of the signature of this treaty at the outset of the fifty-first UN General Assembly. The European Union remains fully committed to this objective.

However, if this historic opportunity is to be grasped, the text must be forwarded for adoption without delay.

On 28 June, at the close of the spring session of the Conference, the Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban, Ambassador Jaap Ramaker, presented a draft integrated treaty text. He has made clear that this text represents, in his judgement, the maximum common ground between the negotiators. Nothing that has happened since the resumption of the current session of the Conference on Disarmament would suggest a different judgement. The European Union believes that the 28 June text must command respect for its determined effort to accommodate, to the greatest extent possible, views which have not been easy to reconcile.

Because the current text attempts to balance competing requirements, it does not and cannot reflect all the aspirations of all participants in the negotiations. European Union members are not fully satisfied with the treatment of some of the key issues in the draft treaty. Like others, however, the European Union feels that a spirit of compromise must prevail at this late stage. Too much is at stake for us to risk failure of this endeavour.

The European Union continues to believe that the conclusion of this treaty will be a concrete step in the full realisation and effective implementation of Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. It will contribute to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to the process of nuclear disarmament and, therefore, to the enhancement of international peace and security.